

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

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DEPARTMENT PASS USIA

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PDIP PINS PFOR ASEC GR US

SUBJECT: GREEK GOVERNMENT OFFERS REWARD FOR INFORMATION

LEADING TO SOLUTION OF MURDER OF RICHARD S. WELCH

REF: A. ATHENS 10187(NOTAL) B. ATHENS 10189(NOTAL)

1. DESPITE THE BLACKOUT ORDERED OVER THE WEEKEND (REF A),
THE ATHENS PRESS HAS CONTINUED TO PRINT STORIES ON THE
WELCH ASSASSINATION BASED LARGELY ON FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS.
HOWEVER, THE PRINCIPAL STORY IN THE PRESS ON DEC 30 IS
THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER OF
MONETARY REWARDS FOR INFORMATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE
ASSASSINATION. REPORTS ALSO COVER THE SHIPMENT OF THE REMAINS
OF THE DECEASED TO THE US.

2. THE MINISTRYS ANNOUNCEMENT STATES THAT THE GREEK
GOVERNMENT HAD AUTHORIZED PAYMENT OF FIVE MILLION DRACHMAS
TO ANYONE PROVIDING SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE IDENTITY OF THE
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MURDERERS; A SUM OF BETWEEN ONE AND TWO MILLION DRACHMAS

WILL BE GIVEN FOR INFORMATION WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO CLARIFICATION OF THE AFFAIR. THE ANNOUNCEMENT ASSERTED THAT ANYONE PROVIDING SUCH INFORMATION COULD BE ASSURED THAT HIS ANONYMITY WOULD BE PROTECTED IN EVERY WAY. THE MINISTRY CITED AS A BASIS FOR THIS THE JUSTIFIED PUBLIC INTEREST AND THE NEED TO ACCELERATE THE INVESTIGATION SO THAT AN EARLY SOLUTION TO THE CRIME, WHICH IS BOTH "HIDEOUS AND UNPRECEDENTED IN GREEK EXPERIENCE," CAN BE FOUND.

3. PRESS REPORTS ALSO COVERED THE SIMPLE CEREMONY (REF B) HELD ON DEC 29 AT THE ATHENAI (US) AIR BASE WHEN THE REMAINS OF THE DECEASED DEPARTED FOR THE UNITED STATES. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS CARRIED A PHOTOGRAPH OF AN HONOR GUARD OF MARINES CARRYING THE COFFIN ONTO THE AIRCRAFT.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN NO LEADS IN THE INVESTIGATION. THE GREEK PRESS HAD REPORTED EARLIER THAT TWO DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE WELCH MURDER. ONE CALLED ITSELF THE "ORGANIZATION OF OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL IDEA" AND THE OTHER THE "NOVEMBER 17TH" ORGANIZATION (AFTER THE DATE OF THE 1973 EVENTS AT THE POLYTECHNION). HOWEVER THE POLICE HAVE APPARENTLY NOT TAKEN EITHER OF THESE CLAIMS SERIOUSLY.

5. COMMENT: IN RESPONSE TO PRESS QUERIES THE ONLY REPLIES WE ARE MAKING HAVE BEEN IN CONNECTION WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE REMAINS OF THE DECEASED AND OF THE FAMILY, AND BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF A GENERAL AND UNCLASSIFIED NATURE. MORE SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE MAKING NO COMMENT IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THE ASSASSINATION ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH GREECE AND ARE OF COURSE REFERINING FROM ANY COMMENT ON THE CRIME ITSELF OR THE INVESTIGATION.

6. DEPT, USIA AND OTHER WASHINGTON AGENCIES DEALING WITH THEMEDIA SOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT ALTHOUGH A VIRTUAL BLACKOUT EXISTS OF LOCAL COMMENT ON THE MURDER, THE GREEK PRESS CONTINUES TO REPRODUCE FOREIGN PRESS ACCOUNTS AND STATEMENTS. IT IS IN FACT RELYING ON THESE TO KEEP THE STORY ROLLING. AS USUAL "QUOTATIONS" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARE FREQUENTLY WRENCHED OUT OF CONTEXT AND ELABORATED TO SUIT THE EDITORIAL PURPOSES OF INDIVIDUAL GREEK PAPERS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR US SPOKESMEN TO AVOID SPECULATIVE COMMENT OF ANY KIND, WHETHER FOR ATTRIBUTION OR ON BACKGROUND, AND FOR VOA TO CONFINE ITS TREATMENT TO HARD NEWS DEVELOPMENTS.

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